

Effectiveness of Reading English Newspapers for Improving Vocabulary and Reading Skills of Students of Dhaka University

Raju Ahmmed¹

¹ Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Maritime University, Bangladesh

E-mail: rajudueng@gmail.com

Correspondence: Plot# 14/06-14/23, Pallabi Mirpur-12, Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh. Tel: +8801727-542624

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Abstract

The aim of this research paper is to investigate how reading English newspapers improves vocabulary and reading skills of Students of Dhaka University. The target population of this study ranges from first year to Masters' students of Dhaka University. The study was conducted on thirty students by means of questionnaire. A list of twenty words from "The Daily Star" on 21 November 2015 was provided to test how much vocabulary participants have learnt by reading English newspapers. On the basis of questionnaire and vocabulary list, the study focuses on the effectiveness of English Newspapers in improving vocabulary and reading skills. The study indicates that students' vocabulary and reading skills are gradually improving.

Keywords: Improve skills, questionnaire, vocabulary, effectiveness.

1. Introduction

Newspaper articles are written clearly and directly, making them perfect for language learning. The language used in newspaper is a day to day language. Reading English newspapers can help students learn a lot of vocabulary, raise reading skills and increase reading speed because the contents of the English newspapers are rich and vivid. Moreover, the language of the English newspapers is a very authentic one which students can use in their daily conversations. Besides, English newspapers help students to enjoy reading, based on their interests. So, the English newspapers can be learners' personal English classroom and can help students acquire higher level of proficiency in English. The following research questions are designed to streamline of the study-

- To what extent do the English newspapers improve the reading skills of students of Dhaka University?
- To what extent is the students' vocabulary improving?

2. Literature Review

Previously many studies have been conducted in the field of newspaper reading habits. Researchers all over the world have contributed through their findings and recommendations. According to Cheyney (1982) newspaper is the textbook that provides up-to-date information on local, provincial, national and world affairs. Reading builds vocabulary skills and background knowledge that strengthens reading skills and increases the enjoyment of reading (Strommen and Mates, 2004). The practice of reading newspaper has been associated with improvement in students' attitudes towards reading overall (Palmer, J.W. and Eriksen, L.B., 1999). In a recent study Bndaka (2007) found that newspaper articles help to develop students reading skills in senior high school. Again Mylopoulos (1985) says "Reading English newspaper gives educational support to language development". Academic American Encyclopedia (1989:171) describes newspapers as "an unbound publication issued at regular intervals that seeks to inform, influence and entertain". Newton (1993) says, "Reading newspapers improves literacy skills." So it is evident from the previous studies that reading English newspapers helps learners develop vocabulary and reading skills. They can learn to read a text quickly and understand the key ideas.

3. Objectives of the Research

The objectives of this research are-

- To find out whether reading English newspapers improves students' vocabulary.
- To understand whether the habit of reading English newspapers improve students' reading skills.
- To see whether the students can use the words learned from English newspapers.
- To identify how much time students spend for reading English newspapers

4. Limitation of the Research

The number of participants was only thirty and the participants were not from one department and same year but from several departments and different years. Although participants' knowledge of vocabulary was tested, their reading skills were not tested through comprehension or some other techniques because it is time consuming and participants may feel unwilling to spend much time for the research.

5. Methodology of the Research

5.1 Participants

The study was conducted on thirty students who are currently studying at Dhaka University. The participants range from first year to Masters students and they were from several departments namely Arabic, Bangla, English, Finance, History, Islamic Studies, Islamic History, International Relations, Law, Marketing, Political Science, Public Administration and Peace and Conflict.

5.2 Sampling

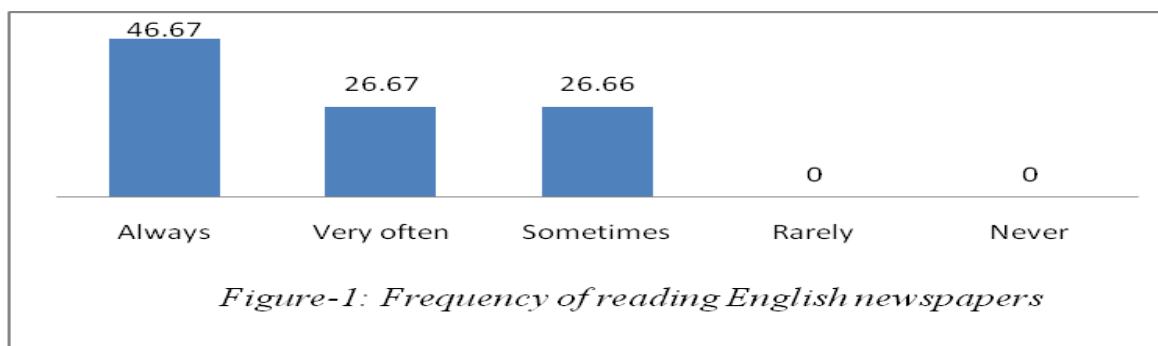
The participants were selected by convenience sampling. The study was conducted on the students who are available and willing to take part in the research.

5.3 Instrument

Data was collected by means of questionnaire. Five point likert scales was used and the research questionnaire was close ended. Again, a list of twenty words from "The Daily Star" on 21 November 2015 was provided to test students' knowledge of vocabulary. The collected data focused on whether the reading skills of the participants are improving or remaining the same. It also focused on if participants' vocabulary is improving.

6. Data Analysis and Findings

6.1 Frequency of Reading English Newspapers



From the collected data it is noticed that the majority of the students read English newspapers regularly. 14 participants (46.67%) said that they always read English newspapers whereas 8 participants (26.67%) read very often. Again, 8 participants (26.66%) read the English newspapers sometimes. It is evident from the graph that students try to read English newspapers regularly.

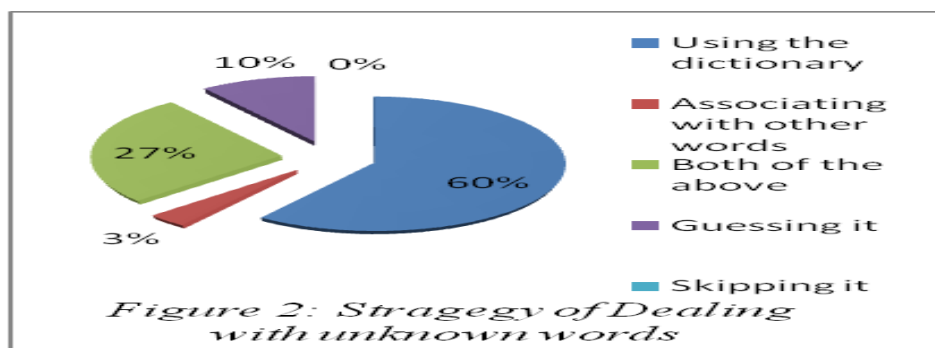
6.2 Duration of Reading English Newspapers

Table-1: Duration of reading English newspapers

Duration	Frequency	Percentage (%)
6 months	7	23.33
1 year	4	13.33
More than 1 year	2	6.67
2 years	4	13.33
More than 2 years	13	43.33

From the collected data, it is noticed that 13 students (43.33%) have been reading English newspapers for more than two years. Besides, 7 students (23.33%) have been reading for 6 months. Again, 4 participants (13.33%) have been reading for one year and for two years respectively. However, 2 participants (6.67%) have been reading for more than one year. It is very clear that a large number of students have been reading English newspapers for more than two years and the reason behind it is that they want to improve their English by reading English newspapers regularly.

6.3 Strategy of Dealing with Unknown Words



The participants were asked what they do when they find any unknown words in the newspaper. 18 participants (60%) responded that they use the dictionary whereas 8 participants (27%) use both strategies (using dictionary and associating with other words). However, one participant (3%) said that he uses only one strategy (associating with other words) and 3 participants (10%) guess the meaning and continue reading without looking up the words from the dictionary. Using the dictionary and the associating with other words are the two major strategies that students mostly use.

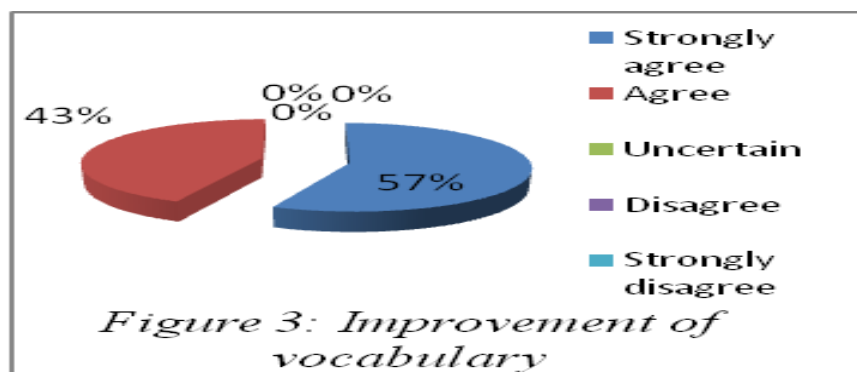
6.4 Usefulness of Keeping a Diary

Table-2: Usefulness of keeping a diary

Opinions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	13	43.33
Agree	15	50
Uncertain	2	6.77
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0

Students who want to develop their vocabulary by reading English newspapers keep a diary to note down the meanings of the unknown words. Then, in their free time they try to learn the words. The students were asked what they think about the benefits of keeping a diary. 13 students (43.33%) strongly agree and 15 students (50%) simply agree about the usefulness of keeping a diary to note down the meanings of unknown words. The majority of the participants have positive views about keeping a diary because it helps them to learn and remember the new words better.

6.5 Improvement of Students' Vocabulary



The respondents were asked whether they think that their vocabulary is increasing day by day because it is assumed that reading English newspaper helps develop students' vocabulary. 17 students (57%) strongly agree that their vocabulary is improving by reading English newspapers whereas 13 students (43%) simply agree about their improvement. All participants agree that their vocabulary is gradually improving and none of the participants denies about this improvement.

6.6 Word Lists for Testing Participants' Knowledge of Vocabulary

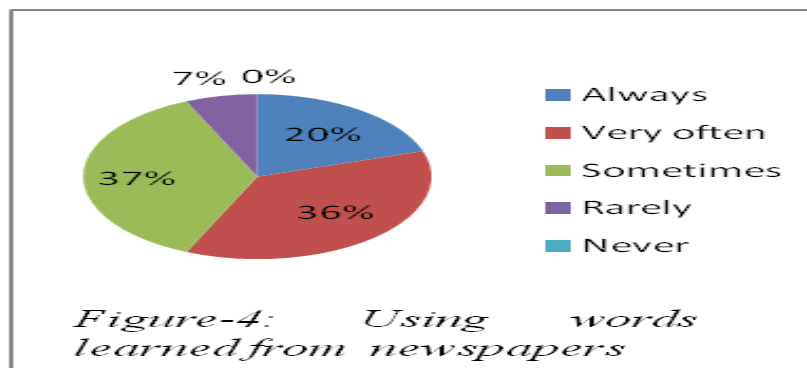
Table-3: Students' knowledge of vocabulary

Sl.	Words	I know the meaning	I don't know the meaning	Can't remember now
1	Contender	15	6	9
2	Contest	30	0	0
3	Grass root leader	27	3	0
4	Municipal	30	0	0
5	Rivals	27	1	2
6	Vie for	18	10	2
7	Aspirants	28	1	1
8	Resolution	30	0	0
9	Forge	25	3	2
10	Eradicate	28	1	1
11	Execution	29	0	1
12	Siege	20	7	3

13	Trapped	28	2	0
14	Assault	28	2	0
15	Hostage	28	1	1
16	Troops	28	1	1
17	Expansion	28	2	0
18	Gallows	24	3	3
19	Intensify	28	0	2
20	Applaud	27	0	3

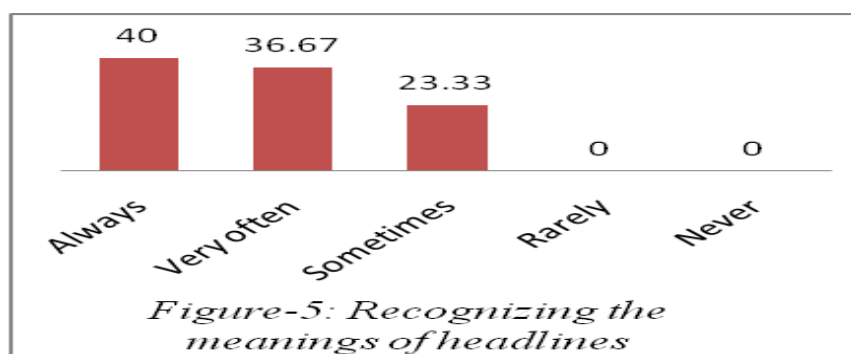
After analyzing the word list and the participants' responses it is seen that words like 'contest', 'municipal' and 'resolution' were known to all participants. On the other hand words like 'contender', 'vie for' and 'siege' were unknown to many participants. However, most of the words taken from "The Daily Star" on 21 November 2015 were known to the participants and only a few participants did not know or could not remember the meanings of those words. This data clarifies that most of the participants have enhanced their vocabulary by reading English newspapers.

6.7 Use of Words Learned from English Newspapers



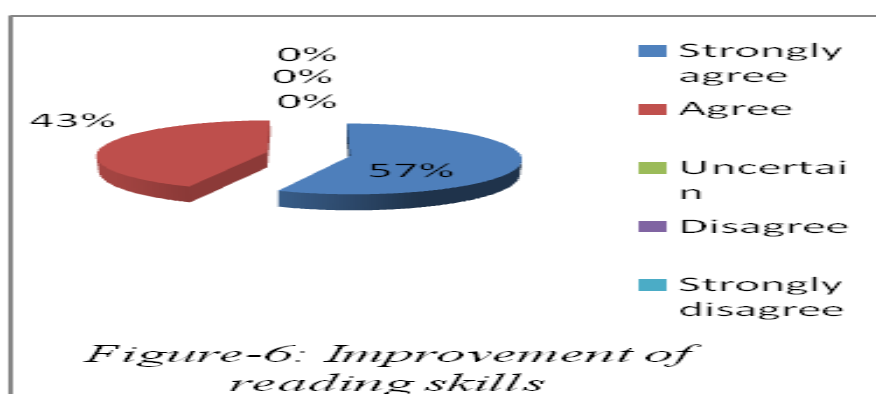
Many learners have a good store of words but it is often seen they can't use their memorized words when the situation demands. So, the participants of this research were asked whether they can use their learned words in their real life situations. 6 students (20%) said they always use the words learned from English newspapers. 11 students (37%) use the learned words sometimes whereas 11 students (37%) use them very often. The rest 2 students (7%) rarely use them. It is noticeable that students are being able to use words learned from English newspapers.

6.8 Recognizing the Meanings of Headlines



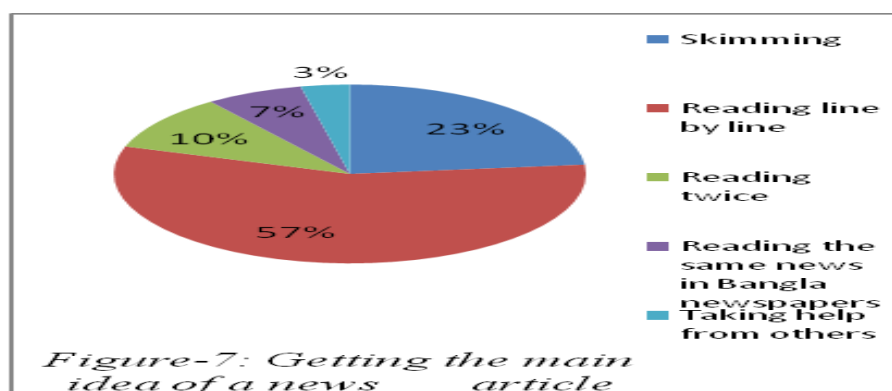
Sometimes many good readers find difficulties to understand the meanings of the captions of the newspapers. To understand this problem, students were asked how often they can recognize the meaning of the words from the headlines. 12 students (40%) said that they always recognize the meanings of headlines at the first reading and so they can be categorized as very good readers. Again, 11 students (36.67%) said that they recognize the meaning of the captions very often and this means that their reading skills are improving but they need to develop more. On the other hand, 7 students (23.33%) said that they recognize the meanings of headlines sometimes and this indicates that their reading skills and vocabulary have not developed much. It is also clear that most of the students try to understand the meanings of headlines at the first reading.

6.9 Improvement of Reading Skills



It is believed that reading English newspapers improves learners' reading skills. The respondents were asked whether their reading skills are improving or remaining the same. 13 participants (43%) strongly agree whereas 13 participants (43%) simply agree about their improvement of reading skills. Again, it is evident that no participants deny this improvement. Therefore, it is evident that the reading skills of all the participants are improving day by day.

6.10 Getting the Main Idea of a News Article



The participants were asked how they get the main idea of a news article. 17 participants (57%) said that they read line by line to understand the theme whereas 10 participants (23%) read by skimming. 3 participants (10%)

can understand the main idea by reading the article twice. Again, 2 students (7%) read the same news in a Bangla newspaper and the rest 1 respondent (3%) says that he takes help from others.

7. Recommendation

Students who want to improve their English can read English newspapers regularly and develop their proficiency in English. They can improve their reading, writing, and vocabulary. English language teachers can also bring a recent news article to the class and can teach vocabulary and reading skills. In fact, newspaper articles are considered authentic materials to be used for class room purpose.

8. Conclusion

By reading English newspapers students can have knowledge about their country as well as about the world. Again, reading English newspapers widens students' outlook and enriches their knowledge. Reading English newspapers can be supplementary to texts books. Students who want study and learn outside of their syllabus can read English newspapers regularly. They can enjoy reading the articles which they like most. Besides, reading English newspapers is very helpful for learning new words, idioms phrases and sentence structures. It also helps them to learn how to take out the meaning of the sentences. To sum up, English newspapers help students to become better learners.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Questionnaire

The objective of this questionnaire is to find out the effectiveness of reading English newspapers in developing

vocabulary and reading skills of Students of Dhaka University. Please circle the options or put tick marks.

Subject

Department

1. I read the English Newspapers-

Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
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2. I have been reading the English newspapers for-

6 months	1 year	More than 1 year	2 years	More than 2 years
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3. I deal with the unknown words by-

- a) Using the dictionary b) Associating with other words
c) Both of the above d) Guessing it e) Skipping it

4. I think keeping a diary for noting the meanings of the unknown words is useful.

Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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5. My vocabulary is gradually improving.

Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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6. I try to use the words that I learn from the English newspapers.

Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
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7. I recognize the meaning of the headlines at the first reading.

Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
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8. I think my reading skill is improving.

Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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9. I get the main idea of a news article by-

- a) Skimming b) Reading line by line c) Reading twice
d) Reading the same news in a Bangla newspaper e) Taking help from others

Appendix B

Please put a tick mark under the columns that you think appropriate for you.

	Words	I know the meaning	I don't know the meaning	Can't remember now
1	Contender			
2	Contest			

3	Grass root leader
4	Municipal
5	Rivals
6	Vie for
7	Aspirants
8	Resolution
9	Forge
10	Eradicate
11	Execution
12	Siege
13	Trapped
14	Assault
15	Hostage
16	Troops
17	Expansion
18	Gallows
19	Intensify
20	Applaud

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